

3-1943
PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN CITY
DAVID BORGIDA

JULY 13, 1978
SERIES 6 #2

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

TAPE: CUT ONE INTRO MUSIC BRIDGE FROM "HOW THE WEST WAS WON",
UPBEAT ADVENTURE THEME, ESTABLISH AS DESIRED, AND FADE
UNDER.

NARR: MUCH HAS BEEN SAID OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SETTLED
THE WESTERN PART OF THE UNITED STATES. DRIVEN BY
CURIOSITY, OR GREED, OR THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE, THEY
FORGED THROUGH UNCHARTED LAND WITH ALMOST FEARLESS VIGOR.
THE FIRST TO COME BLAZED A PATH ON FOOT. THOSE TO FOLLOW
DID SO OVER RAIL.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- RAILROAD SOUNDS, ESTABLISH AS DESIRED AND
FADE UNDER.

NARR: SUCH WAS THE CASE BACK IN 1871 WHEN THE NORTHERN PACIFIC
RAILROAD LAID TRACK TO THE RED RIVER VALLEY AREA - WHAT
TODAY COULD BE CALLED THE UPPER MID-WEST. SUDDENLY
THE WILDERNESS OF THE DAKOTA TERRITORY DEVELOPED INTO
A FLOURISHING PIONEER CITY, A GATEWAY TO THE GREAT
NORTHWEST EXPANSE. WHEN CONSTRUCTION OF THE NORTHERN
PACIFIC TEMPORARILY STOPPED TWO YEARS LATER, LOCAL
BUSINESS LEADERS ORGANIZED A FLOUR MILL, AND URGED
DEPENDENCE ON AGRICULTURE. FROM THOSE RAILROAD AND
AGRICULTURAL BEGINNINGS, TWIN COMMUNITIES WERE BORN,
NAMED AFTER TWO DIRECTORS OF THE RAILROAD. ONE OF THOSE -
THE LARGER AND DOMINANT OF THE TWO - FARGO, NOW OF THE
STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, IS THE FOCUS OF THIS VOICE OF
AMERICA SPECIAL REPORT: "PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN CITY."
YOUR NARRATOR IS _____.

NARR: TODAY FARGO IS NESTLED IN THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF NORTH DAKOTA, JUST ACROSS THE RED RIVER FROM IT'S TWIN CITY, MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA. SMALL IN COMPARISON TO AMERICA'S URBAN CENTERS, IT'S STILL THE BIGGEST CITY IN THE SPARSELY POPULATED STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, WITH A METROPOLITAN POPULATION OF ABOUT ONE HUNDRED THIRTY THOUSAND PEOPLE. MANY OF THOSE PEOPLE ARE DIRECT DESCENDANTS FROM THOSE EARLY RAILROAD WORKERS AND SETTLERS, AND THEY SHARE THE SAME ENTHUSIASM FOR THE LAND AND CITY AS THEIR FOREFATHERS DID. IT'S BEEN THAT WAY SINCE THE CITY STARTED IN 1875.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- LARSEN

"I THINK THAT YOU COULD START THE PROGRESSIVE STORY ABOUT FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA, BACK PROBABLY AT THE TIME WHEN THE CITY LITERALLY BURNED TO THE GROUND BEFORE THE 1900'S, AND THE FOLKS THAT WERE HERE DIDN'T LET A MAJOR FIRE STOP THEM AT ALL. THEY JUST TURNED AROUND AND WENT OUT AND STARTED REBUILDING THEIR CITY."

NARR: THAT WAS FARGO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICIAL KEN LARSEN, SPEAKING OF THE PIONEER SPIRIT THAT, HE SAYS, STILL CHARACTERIZES MANY FARGOANS TODAY. OTHERS IN THE FARGO COMMUNITY AGREE THAT THE HARD-WORKING, INDEPENDENT FARGOAN IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST A PIONEER STEREOTYPE. GENE DAHL, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE LARGEST MANUFACTURING COMPANY IN FARGO, THE STEIGER TRACTOR COMPANY, SAYS BOTH THE AREA AND ITS PEOPLE ARE WELL-SUITED TO HIS BUSINESS:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- DAHL

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T. "ONE OF THE REASONS THAT WE WANT TO BE IN FARGO IS WE'RE IN THE VERY CENTER OF OUR MARKET. NORTH DAKOTA IS THE NUMBER ONE FOUR WHEEL DRIVE CONSUMING STATE IN THE UNITED STATES. THE OTHER THING IS THAT MOST OF OUR EMPLOYEES ARE EITHER BORN ON THE FARM OR ARE ONE GENERATION OFF THE FARM, AND THEY KNOW EXACTLY HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO PUT TOGETHER A QUALITY TRACTOR. EITHER THEY HAVE RUN A TRACTOR OR THEY HAVE RELATIVES THAT RUN TRACTORS, AND THEY KNOW HOW IMPORTANT IT IS THAT YOU HAVE TRACTORS RUNNING WHEN THE SEASON COMES FOR DOING YOUR TRACTOR WORK. AND IT'S BECAUSE OF THIS WE FEEL WE HAVE VERY HIGH QUALITY MACHINES, NOT ONLY IN THE DESIGN BUT IN THE PRODUCTION OF THESE MACHINES. IT'S BECAUSE OUR EMPLOYEES REALLY CARE ABOUT THE KIND OF MACHINE THEY PUT TOGETHER. SO WE'RE VERY HAPPY WITH OUR EMPLOYEE HERE IN FARGO."

NARR: THE HARD-WORKING, INDEPENDENT FABRIC OF WHICH MANY FARGOANS ARE MADE CAN BE SEEN IN POLITICS AS WELL AS BUSINESS. AGRICULTURE IS THE HEART OF FARGO'S ECONOMY, SO FARGO VOTERS WANT POLITICIANS WHO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT TAKES TO GROW SUGARBEETS AND POTATOES. AND THEY WANT SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS LIFE IN A SMALL TOWN, AND SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO PRESERVE THEIR SMOG-FREE ENVIRONMENT. ALL THOSE THINGS - AND MORE- ARE WHAT FARGOANS WANT IN THEIR LEADERS. POLITICAL AFFILIATION, SAYS JOHN PAULSON, EDITOR OF THE FARGO-MOORHEAD FORUM NEWSPAPER, IS SECONDARY:

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- PAULSON

"I WISH THERE WAS A WAY TO EASILY TAG THEM BUT THERE ISN'T BECAUSE THEY'RE CHANGEABLE, THERE'S NO PATTERN THAT YOU CAN SAY THESE FARGOANS ARE THIS KIND OF PEOPLE. THEY'LL VOTE DEMOCRAT ONE TIME, THEY'LL VOTE REPUBLICAN THE NEXT. WE'VE GOT A REPUTATION AS BEING A SOLID REPUBLICAN STATE, BUT NORTH DAKOTA HAS HAD A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNOR FOR GOING ON(ALMOST) TWENTY YEARS. SO AS I SAY THERE'S NO PATTERN, THEY PRETTY MUCH TEND TO VOTE FOR AN INDIVIDUAL RATHER THAN ANY STRAIGHT PARTY LINE PHILOSOPHY."

NARR: THE SAME INDEPENDENCE THAT CHARACTERIZES THE VOTING
HABITS OF FARGOANS ALSO APPLIES TO THEIR LOCAL POLITICAL
STRUCTURE. IT IS DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE BUREAUCRACY
AND MAXIMIZE INDEPENDENCE.

TAPE: / CUT SIX -- HENTGES

"WE HAVE A COMMISSION FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN WHICH THERE
ARE FIVE COMMISSIONERS OF WHICH THE MAYOR AND PRESIDENT
OF THE BOARD IS ONE AND IS ELECTED IN A SEPARATE COLUMN
(SEPARATELY)."

NARR: FARGO'S FORMER MAYOR, DICK HENTGES:

TAPE: CUT SEVEN -- HENTGES

"ALL OF US, HOWEVER, ARE ELECTED AT-LARGE (INDEPENDENTLY)
THROUGHOUT THE CITY, WE DO NOT REPRESENT A PARTICULAR
NEIGHBORHOOD, AND THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I THINK THAT
A CITY THIS SIZE - WE CAN STILL WORK VERY WELL WITH THIS
FORM OF GOVERNMENT. IF YOU CAN GET THREE VOTES YOU
CAN JUST DO ABOUT ANYTHING AT ANY TIME. SO WE CAN BE
VERY RESPONSIVE, IN TERMS OF MEETING NEEDS, WE DON'T
HAVE TO GET EIGHT OR NINE PEOPLE TO GO THROUGH ALL
KINDS OF THINGS (TO GET SOMETHING DONE.) WE HAVE ADOPTED
A HOME RULE CHARTER, AND WE'RE QUITE FREE TO GOVERN
OURSELVES."

NARR: EDUCATION, LIKE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE, HAS ALWAYS BEEN
AN IMPORTANT PART OF LIFE IN FARGO. IN FACT, FARGO HAD IT'S
FIRST COLLEGE BY 1887. TODAY, THAT COMMITMENT TO
EDUCATION IS STILL STRONG. AGAIN, FORMER MAYOR HENTGES:

TAPE: CUT EIGHT -- HENTGES

"WE MAKE A TREMENDOUS INVESTMENT, NOT JUST IN FARGO, BUT
NORTH DAKOTA, MAKES A TREMENDOUS INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION.
WE JUST MANDATE IT, YOU MUST BE EDUCATED AND WE HAVE A
SMALL STATE SUCH AS THIS WITH SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND
PEOPLE WHICH HAS TEN FOUR YEAR COLLEGES, AND THREE JUNIOR
COLLEGES AND A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL YOU TAKE A CITY OF THREE
MILLION IN SOME PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND IT MAY HAVE
ONE COLLEGE, BUT WE HAVE ABOUT THIRTEEN IN A STATE."

NARR: FARGO'S MANY COLLEGES HAVE DONE MORE FOR THE COMMUNITY THAN JUST EDUCATE NORTH DAKOTA'S YOUTH. BRANCHES OF NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY LOCATED AROUND THE STATE WORK CLOSELY WITH THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY IN EXPLORING NEW AND IMPROVED FARMING TECHNIQUES. AND ON THE CULTURAL FRONT, THERE'S COOPERATION BETWEEN EACH COLLEGES' ART DEPARTMENT AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. THE RESULT? A GROWING APPRECIATION OF THE ARTS, SAYS ELIZABETH WORDEN, AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF FARGO'S ARTS COUNCIL:

TAPE: CUT NINE WORDEN

"WE HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY, IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE, WHO ARE ANXIOUS FOR THE ARTS TO FLOURISH IN FARGO. WE HAVE HAD A FARGO MOORHEAD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS, WE HAVE SOME EXCEPTIONALLY FINE CONCERTS FROM THAT SYMPHONY. WE DID START A FARGO-MOORHEAD CIVIC OPERA COMPANY, AND NOW HAVE AT LEAST THREE PERFORMANCES A YEAR WITH GUEST ARTISTS. BOTH OF THESE GROUPS PERFORM IN OUR CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM AS WELL. WE HAVE A VERY ACTIVE PLAINS ART MUSEUM, MANY PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY WHO ARE ARTISTS THEMSELVES, AND OF COURSE, TRAVELING EXHIBITS AND ARTISTS BROUGHT IN FOR US IN FARGO TO APPRECIATE."

NARR: BUT ARTS AREN'T THE ONLY THINGS FARGOANS APPRECIATE. WITH FOUR DISTINCT SEASONS- A FACT THAT SURPRISES MANY AMERICANS WHO ONLY THINK OF FARGO'S FREEZING WINTERS - AND NUMEROUS LAKES AND PARKS, RECREATION IS A BIG PART OF COMMUNITY LIFE. ALL MAJOR SPORTS ARE PLAYED, AND BECAUSE NORTH DAKOTA IS ONE OF THE NATION'S FINEST WATERFOWL HUNTING REGIONS, HUNTING IS POPULAR, TOO. ALL THIS MAKES FOR A STYLE OF LIFE THAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE WHO LOVE THE OUTDOORS - AND KEEPS AWAY THOSE WHO PREFER FAST PACED URBAN LIVING.

NARR:
(CONT)

THAT FACT, AND THE PRESENCE OF FIVE HOSPITALS, TWO MEDICAL CLINICS, AND NUMEROUS OTHER TECHNICAL SCHOOLS, HAS MADE FARGO A MEDICAL CENTER WITH A NATIONAL REPUTATION. DOCTORS LIKE THE COMMUNITY, AND IT'S MEDICAL FACILITIES....

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THAT,
ACCORDING TO WARNER LITTEN, THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF THE FARGO CLINIC:

TAPE: 10 CUT TEN LITTEN

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"THE FIRST REASON A PHYSICIAN COMES TO FARGO IS BECAUSE HE'S GOING TO ENJOY AN ENRICHING PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE. I'VE HEARD THESE DOCTORS TALK ABOUT THE KIND OF PATIENTS THEY SEE AND THE CLIENTELE THEY HAVE IN THIS AREA, HOW RESPONSIVE THEY ARE. THEY LIKE TO PRACTICE MEDICINE IN THIS AREA - THAT'S ONE REASON THEY COME TO TOWN. SECONDLY, THEY'LL COME TO FARGO BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT IT'S A COMMUNITY THAT HAS GOOD SCHOOLS, IT HAS GOOD PARK SYSTEMS, IT'S A COMMUNITY, THAT, FROM A MEDICAL STANDPOINT, WILL ALLOW THEM A CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION, IT'LL ALLOW THEM AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH, IT'LL ALLOW THEM TO PRACTICE WITH COLLEAGUES WHO ARE RECOGNIZED NATIONWIDE FOR THEIR EXPERTISE, THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT THESE YOUNGER DOCTORS THESE DAYS ARE LOOKING FOR."

NARR: THE GROWTH OF FARGO'S MEDICAL CENTER HAS SHOWN THE COMMUNITY THAT IT IS CAPABLE OF HANDLING OTHER MAJOR INDUSTRY, BESIDES AGRICULTURE.

AND THE AREA IS GROWING STEADILY; IN THE LAST SEVEN YEARS IT HAS GAINED ABOUT TWO THOUSAND NEW JOBS. IN 1972, A NEW SIX POINT FOUR HECTARE SHOPPING CENTER WITH EIGHTY RETAIL STORES WAS BUILT UNDER ONE ROOF. AND TODAY RESIDENTS EVEN COMPLAIN OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION. STILL, CITY OFFICIALS REALIZE THAT-AT LEAST FOR NOW - AGRICULTURE HOLDS THE KEY TO FUTURE GROWTH.
KEN LARSEN OF THE FARGO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:

TAPE: CUT ELEVEN LARSEN

"OUR GROWTH FACTOR, THOUGH, TO A LARGE DEGREE IS GOING TO BE DEPENDENT ON WHAT HAPPENS WITH A LOT OF AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS THAT ARE GOING ON. IF THE PRICE OF ALL OF THE FARM PRODUCTS CAN'T BE STABILIZED TO THE PLACE THAT THE FARMER CAN MAKE A PROFIT, BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO PAY OBVIOUSLY THE INCREASED COSTS FOR EVERYTHING THAT THEY BUY AND IN TURN IF THEIR PRODUCT CAN'T PRODUCE A PROFIT FOR THEM, THEN OUR GROWTH FACTOR WILL SLOW DOWN. AND SO OUR GROWTH IS REALLY DEPENDENT ON THE AGRICULTURE ECONOMY."

NARR: EXACTLY HOW MUCH FARGO WILL GROW IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. BUT AFTER REVIEWING ITS IT'S AND LISTENING TO IT'S PEOPLE, YOU GET THE FEELING THEY CAN DEAL WITH ALMOST ANYTHING. AFTER ALL, THEIR ANCESTORS SETTLED THE LAND AND REBUILT THE CITY AFTER A FIRE. SURELY NOW THEY CAN DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF GROWTH.

TAPE: // CUT TWELVE "HOW THE WEST WAS WON"Y BRIDGE, USE CUT ONE AS DESIRED, AND UNDER ANNCR:

NARR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO ANOTHER "PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN CITY." FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA, WAS WRITTEN BY DAVID BORGIDA. YOUR NARRATOR WAS -----, I AM -----.

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